

PUNSWAN KARMA: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has mentioned many ideas for getting a healthy child for producing the best generation in the society and also for a choice of gender. Age of Ancient India, Ayurveda and all Vedas of Indian cultures makes more important on quality of the next generation and the *Rishis* of Ancient India are all time alert for producing the best Generation in society. Thus, Ayurveda mentioned many ideas for getting best child and also for our choice of Gender. For making of healthy and developed society, our ancient saints have given us most important sixteen 'Sanskars' for all human being in whole world. *Punswan Sanskar* is one of those sixteen *sanskars*.

Keywords: *Punswan, labdhgarbha, Nasya, Ritukal*

INTRODUCTION

The procedure to be adopted for achieving progeny of desired sex is known as *pumsawana karma*¹. The classics have described its appropriate period along with the methods. If the methods prescribed in Vedas for achieving male or female progeny are used before conspicuous (*vyaktibhava*) of organs the change of sex is possible. If the *pumsawana karma* is done keeping in mind the living place (*desa*) and specific period (*kala*) the result is definite, otherwise it is just reverse. It should be done after conception but before conspicuousness of organs or up to two months²

Sushruta has advocated that it should be done just after achievement of conception (*labdhgarbha*)³. *Dalhan* has explained that this process is done with three objectives⁴

1) Before conception use of inhalation of drugs etc. followed by coitus is for conception

2) Immediately following conception is for its proper implantation and
3) Before three months for change of sex or having male progeny.

Vagbhata corroborating the period given by *Caraka* says further that it should be done only during *pushya nakshatra*. Citing the options of others, he says that some advise the duration of *punswankarma* for twelve days, others during even days of these twelve days, while some advise its daily use. *Indu* has given four options⁵

1) Only on 1st day
2) On even days
3) Daily
4) Every even day of twelve days period

According to *Vagbhat II* before conspicuousness of body parts and potent *punswanakarma* can alter the luck. *Arundatta* has explained that as potent *pumsawana karma* can alter the luck, thus the success of *punswan-*

wanakarma depends on relative strength of luck⁶

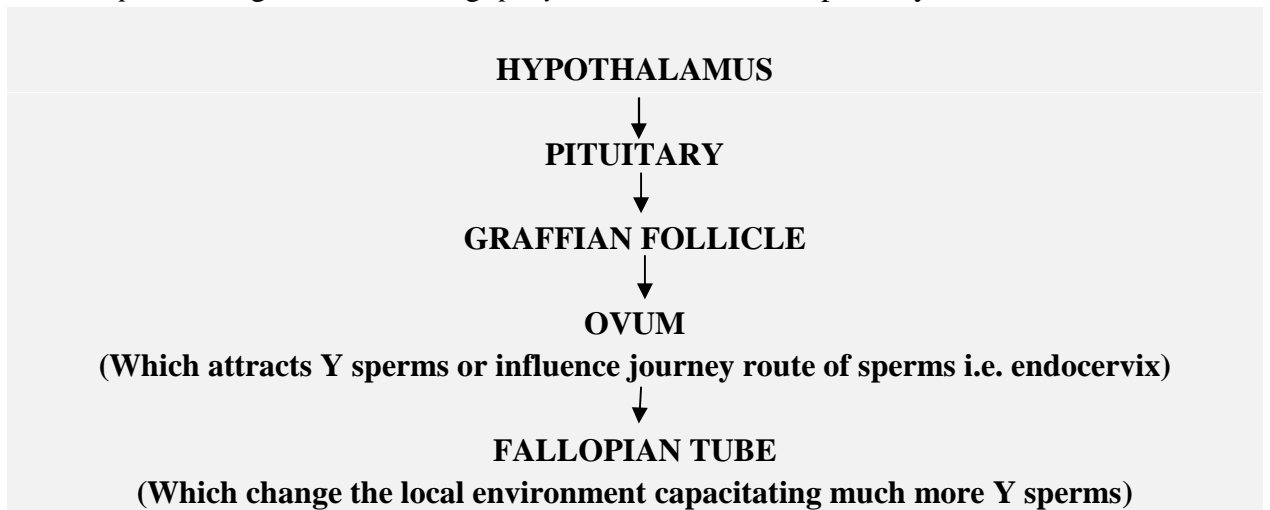
METHOD

- 1) The drug *laksmana*, *vatshunga*, *sahdeva*, *vishwadeva* etc should be pestle with cow’s milk, and 3-4 drops of expressed juice should be instilled in right nostril by the woman desirous of a son; she should not spit it⁷
- 2) An *anupramana* (very small) red hot man shaped structure made with gold, silver or iron should be dipped in handful of curd, milk or water and total quantity should be taken during *pusya nakshatra*⁸
- 3) The woman should inhale the steam of *shalipisti* being cooked during *pusya-*

nakshatra. The same dough should be squeezed and the juice collected in swab. The pregnant woman keeping the head on a doorsill should instill herself few drops in her right nostril⁹

POSSIBLE MECHANISM

Though X and Y sperms do determine the sex of zygote yet every zygote is bisexual initially why? This game is played by nature is not yet to be understood. The mechanism possibly could be: Any drug instilled in nasal mucosa acts by two pathways i.e. reflex stimulation to higher centre and also through absorption. Few drugs are absorbed through nasal mucosa. The drug instilled for *punswan karma* might exert their effect through both these pathways i.e. via



Nasya karma and nasal instillation are two different therapies former is cleansing procedure while latter is putting few drops which may be nutritive.

To understand *punswan* we need to look following points of genetics:

- A baby’s genetic sex is determined at the time of conception. When the baby is conceived, a chromosome from the sperm cell, either X or Y, fuses with the X chromosome in the egg cell, determining whether the baby will be genetically

female (XX) or male (XY). To be genetically female, one needs to be (XX), whereas to be a genetic male, (XY) is needed. It is the Y chromosome that is essential for the development of the male reproductive organs, and with no Y chromosome, an embryo will develop into a female¹⁰

- Initially it was believed that entire Y chromosome (with 30-40 million bases) was responsible for male sex determination. Now this male sex determining region is limited to 250 bases coding for

80 AA in short arm of Y chromosome and is called SRY A fetus doesn't develop its external sexual organs until the second month of pregnancy—seven weeks after conception. The fetus appears to be sexually indifferent, looking neither like a male or a female. Over the next five weeks, the fetus begins producing hormones that cause its sex organs to grow into either male or female organs. This process is called sexual differentiation. The precursor of the internal female sex organs is called the Müllerian system¹¹

- It is believed that a repressor locus on X chromosome represses testicular development on XX females. This locus is neutralized in XY males¹²

Various external factors like metabolites hormones and enzymes etc act as co-repressor. Their presence represses the operon(A group of linked genes and regulatory elements that functions as a unit of transcription.) and prevents or blocks its action. The nasal instillation of the drugs mentioned for *punswan karma* may be acting on co-repressor of SRY thereby blocking the inhibition of testicular development.

CONCLUSION

An ovum is fertilized by the sperms of specific sex chromosomes, naturally after fertilization the chances of reversal of sex by any procedure do not seem to be possible. The time limit of twelve days given by *Vagbhat I* probably refers to *ritukala*. *Dalhana* has mentioned the period of use of drug before coitus in unequivocal words. The description before conspicuousness of body parts can be considered as before conspicuousness of *garbha* i.e. before fertilization of ovum by sperms. It is hypothetically possible that specific procedure done before fertilization

may produce some such changes in female body specially in ovum that it attracts or permits its penetration by specific sex chromosome bearing sperms only.

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